MEMORANDUM

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SUMMARY

DEVELOPING STATES NEED GREATER ACCESS TO GLOBAL MARKETS, JACOB ZUMA TELLS G-20

President Jacob Zuma has called for greater access to global markets for developing countries.
Speaking after a working visit to Hangzhou in China, where he took part in the Group of 20 (G-20) summit, Zuma said that innovation, fair trade and investment were important ingredients for sustainable and inclusive growth.
"Our trade and investment policies should be designed to enable countries to improve competitiveness and gain access to markets, to successfully participate in the global economy," he said.
He also called for the strengthening of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as the principal body to negotiate trade-related matters.
This entailed working towards the early conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda in line with the development mandate and improving market access for exports from developing countries.
On the issue of inclusive and interconnected development, Zuma stated that industrialisation, infrastructure development, intraAfrica trade and curbing illicit financial flows were crucial goals for the development of the African continent, as stipulated in Agenda 2063.
In this regard, SA’s proposal that illicit financial flows from trade mispricing be studied by the WTO was accepted.
This challenge, if addressed, had the potential to unlock millions of dollars that could be used by African governments towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and their development programmes, Zuma said.
With regard to the so-called 4th Industrial Revolution, Zuma said: "For Africa not to be left behind, we must ensure the transfer of technology and investment in skills. In this regard, protection of intellectual property rights should not be used to exclude or create barriers to Africa’s industrialisation. We further recognise that without peace and security there can be no sustainable development or meaningful economic growth." (TMG Digital 05-09-2016)

ZIMBABWE'S FINANCE MINISTER TO PRESENT MID-TERM FISCAL POLICY REVIEW

Zimbabwe's Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa is expected to present a mid-term fiscal policy review on Thursday amid wide expectation that he would come up with measures to stop the free-fall in the comatose economy and restore public confidence in the banking system.

Chinamasa is due to present the belated mid-term policy review before a joint sitting of the National Assembly and the Senate.

The review comes against the backdrop of a crippling liquidity crunch that has seen banks tightening cash withdrawal conditions as well as problems by the government in paying its workers and the closure of companies.

Facing with a dwindling revenue base, the government has since the beginning of 2016 failed to pay its 100,000-plus employees on time, often postponing the pay dates several times during the past few months. The civil service chews up more than 75 percent of the government's revenue per month.

The local private sector is also feeling the pinch of the economic problems facing the country, with several companies being forced to lay off some workers or completely shutting down operations.

Chinamasa is also expected to announce measures to deal with the government's ballooning foreign debt, estimated at around US$10 billion, of which US$1.8 billion are arrears to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and African Development Bank. (APA 08-09-2016)

ABOUT 300 000 WEST AFRICAN FARMERS TO SHARE $5.2M

About 300 000 smallholder farmers from Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal will share $5.2 million, thanks to a partnership between Impact investing pioneer Root Capital and The MasterCard Foundation.

Root Capital announced the new partnership at the ongoing African Green Revolution Forum in Nairobi, Kenya on Thursday.

The funding spreads over five years to support early-stage agricultural businesses that generate transformational impact in rural communities to bring much-needed financing and capacity building to businesses in West Africa that work with farmers otherwise excluded from the formal economy.

In a media statement issued on Thursday, Ann Miles, Director of Financial Inclusion and Youth Livelihoods at The MasterCard Foundation says, "We see this as a good avenue to help increase incomes and opportunities for 4,000 employees of agricultural businesses, 300,000 smallholder farmers, and over two million farm family members."

The partnership intends to cover are; to accelerate the bankability and growth of more than 100 high-impact, early-stage agricultural businesses with capital needs under $150,000 and/or business revenues under $300,000.

It will also pilot an expanded set of advisory services, including leadership development of agribusiness employees; financial literacy training for smallholder farmers; mobile technology and mobile money; and empowering local microfinance institutions to better serve the agricultural sector. (APA 08-08-2016)

SOUTH AFRICA: OFFSHORE DISCLOSURE PROGRAMME MAY RAISE BILLIONS

The state's new special disclosure programme for offshore assets could add R10bn-R15bn to government revenue if handled properly, says tax advisory committee chairman Judge Dennis Davis.

This could "tide us over for a year", and close the revenue gap that the Treasury identified in the February budget, and lessen the need for tax increases.

The programme, which includes an exchange control amnesty and the tax dispensation, is due to run from October 1 to the end of March 2017, and is intended to provide a window for those with undisclosed offshore assets to declare them and pay penalties.

Legislation on the tax programme is going through Parliament, but some tax practitioners say the programme has still not been made attractive enough and, while it could raise revenue, Davis's estimates may be over-optimistic.

Speaking on Monday at the week-long annual Tax Indaba in Midrand, Davis said though an increase in value-added tax (VAT) was the only engine for expanding tax revenue in the longer term, it was not an option that was available in the current economic context.

The Davis Tax Committee has estimated that every one percentage point increase in the VAT rate would increase inflation 0.2-0.3 percentage points, and retard growth by a similar margin.

As it is, economists now expect no growth in 2016. And where the February budget assumed a 0.9% growth rate in 2016, Treasury budget office head Michael Sachs confirmed on Monday that this would be revised down in October's medium-term budget. The IMF has already revised its forecast down to 0.1%.

The weak growth performance has widened the gap between revenue and spending, driving up state debt and forcing the government to slow down on spending growth and find extra revenue to cap debt levels over the medium term and avert a ratings downgrade.

In February, the finance minister raised an extra R18bn in revenue from fuel and other tax increases, and pencilled in additional revenues of R15bn in each of the next two fiscal years, without specifying which taxes might be used to generate this.

The gap is now likely to be larger, and while tax revenue collections have increased consistently faster than the economic growth rate since the global financial crisis, Sachs questioned whether the factors that have driven this buoyancy are sustainable.

That puts pressure on the fiscus to seek new sources of revenue, and the South African Revenue Service (SARS) to be more aggressive about tax compliance.

SARS commissioner Tom Moyane said the weak economic performance posed risks to the tax authority's ability to deliver on this year's R1.175bn revenue target.

The special voluntary disclosure programme for offshore assets comes ahead of automatic exchange of information agreements between tax authorities globally, which are due to kick in during late 2017.

Moyane said 54 jurisdictions had signed up to the exchange of agreements, with another 45 due to sign by 2018.

The Treasury has revised the draft legislation on offshore assets to make it more attractive, but Davis is keen to see the tax on previously undisclosed offshore assets levied at an even lower rate than the draft legislation proposes, to ensure it brings in more revenue.

However, there are differences within the Treasury over the amnesty, with deputy director-general Ismail Momoniat saying that some of his colleagues would prefer not to have the programme and wanted instead to wait for people to be caught, "as they will be in the next few years".

Momoniat also made it clear that the carbon tax and the proposed sugar tax would be implemented.

The sugar tax is expected to collect R4bn at most, but he said revenue raising was not the priority in such "sin" taxes, which were rather designed to take account of the social costs of obesity or climate change. (BD 06-09-2016)

IVORY COAST: ORANGE REINFORCES POSITION AS LEADING ACTOR IN MOBILE FINANCE

The mobile operator Orange has strengthened its position as a leader in mobile financing in Ivory Coast, with the creation of a Conformity Expertise Center known as Orange Money (CECOM), APA learns from a statement seen on Wednesday.

The creation of CECOM in Ivory Coast in order to deploy a single policy of risk management and compliance issues, is a milestone and demonstrates the maturity of Orange in the sector, the statement partly reads, adding that "the overall activities of Orange Money are becoming major issues in a growing number of countries."

In Ivory Coast, Orange Money accounts for up to 10 percent of the company's turnover.

"With this new step, mobile financial services truly enter into the DNA of Orange. The certifications received from Central Banks and our investments in the CECOM demonstrate our commitment towards transformation, which will benefit our customers, the users of Orange Money services," Marc Rennard, the Executive Vice President of Orange Group in charge of customers and mobile banking declared.

According to Bruno Mettling, Deputy General Manager of Orange Group and CEO of Orange Middle East and Africa (MEA) "the acquisition of this status EME allows us to further develop the activity of Orange Money at the heart of our ambition to be the strategic partner in the digital transformation in Africa and Middle East, with the aim of generating over €200 million by 2018."

Based in Abidjan, CECOM is affiliated to the Orange Group and provides a second level control over the activity of Orange Money. CECOM relies on a multidisciplinary team of experts with specialist skills in the banking, telecom and IT. (APA 08-09-2016)

SIERRA LEONE LAUNCHES OPERATION AGAINST GRAFT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) of Sierra Leone has launched an operation aimed at bringing fugitive perpetrators of corruption to justice.

The operation dubbed “Operation Thunderbolt” will seek specifically to rout and bring to justice fugitive persons alleged to have been involved in corrupt acts and who are of interest to the ACC, the agency said in a statement on Wednesday.

In the statement, it announced the detention of a man wanted in relation to a major 2013 corruption scandal. The man, Santigie Kargbo, had fled to Guinea to avoid prosecution.

A clearing and forwarding agent, Kargbo was indicted alongside six others, including a National Revenue Authority official accused of siphoning hundreds of millions of leones of public funds.

Kargbo had quietly returned to Sierra Leone. He becomes the first to be arrested under the new operation. (APA 08-09-2016)

ELECTRIFYING AFRICA: THE CHALLENGE OF THE CENTURY

Energy is at the heart of the development and climate debate as the COP 22 in Marrakesh approaches. Economic actors are beginning to focus their efforts on bringing power to the African continent.

The figures are well-known. The African electricity grid currently provides 160,000MW (the equivalent of Germany’s electrical consumption). Two thirds of this capacity is in North Africa and South Africa. The rest of the continent has access to just 53,000MW, which is the equivalent of Portugal’s electrical supply.

The slow rate at which access to electricity is growing has not kept pace with economic growth and is a burden on development. Official estimates state that 600 million Africans lack electricity. But the real figure is probably much higher.

Momar Nguer, the director of marketing and services for Total, and former director for Africa and the Middle East, said, “There are many more people in Africa without access to electricity than the figures show. Living in a city with an electric grid is not enough.

“People still need the money to access the grid at an affordable price. And on top of the issues of access and cost comes the question of the networks’ reliability.”

Allowing access to “affordable and clean energy” is one of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in September 2015.

The end of centralised networks

PWC recently published a study called Energy Beyond the Grid. It was dedicated to the question of electrification in developing countries, particularly in Asia and Africa.

The report concluded that a purely centralised system could not meet the demands of these countries. This can only be achieved, said PWC, through the development of complementary systems, both on and off-grid, at the scale of individual homes or small communities.

“We estimate that 30% of the demand in rural areas could be met by the extension of the traditional centralised networks,” said Pascale Jean, the head of the energy sector at PWC.

But for Hervé Gouyet, the president of Electricians Without Borders, this is too optimistic.

“When we provide electricity by extending the grid, just 10% of inhabitants gain access to it,” he said at a clean energy conference organised by the Coordinating Committee for the Africa of Tomorrow (CADE). “What is more, it is usually those that were already equipped with electrical generators.”

Local production up to the edge of cities

According to PWC, large-scale power generating systems and centralised grids will continue to develop.

But “for the cities themselves, given the distances between them and losses of up to 20% that occur during transport across the grid. It is better to develop local, decentralised energy generating facilities,” said Nguer.

“Local power stations close to each city could be fueled by solar energy and equipped with a storage system that would be backed up by gas or diesel generators, for example.”

But what should be developed more broadly are off-grid installations and village mini-grids. However, the management of these grids can be complicated.

Generally speaking, “the need for joint action between public and private partners, the sharing of returns on their respective investments […] make infrastructure projects more complicated,” said Jean.

But this has not doused the optimism of some. “Smart grids are developing more quickly around the Zambeze than in the Corrèze,” said Lionel Zinsou, the president of the Africa France Foundation and vice-president of the supervisory board of investment company PAI Partners.

New actors bring competition

Start-ups that marry solar power and digital technology have grown rapidly in rural Africa. They offer leasing deals that allow people to light their homes, run a television, air conditioning, a refrigerator, etc. The client pays a monthly fee by phone and after a set number of years, becomes the owner of the equipment.

“Telecoms and energy actors must work together to ensure interoperability,” Jean stressed.

Historically concentrated on large-scale installations, few big operators yet offer pay as you go electrical services. “But they could develop in this area by buying startups,” she added.

But for Gouyet, “we have to avoid the temptation of the individual kit that just allows people to generate light. Africa needs an electrician, not a lamp salesman.”

Yet it was through the sale of solar lamps that Total first entered the African solar energy market. “Our clients in the suburbs of the big cities, or even right in the cities themselves, bought them to complete their domestic electrical installation and save money on their bills. We also saw that many people first bought these lamps as a test to see whether they should convert their power supply more broadly,” said Ngur.

Mobilising finance

Whatever the technologies chosen, finance will need to be mobilised to support their development on a larger scale.

Today’s low interest rates in developed countries mean that even the smallest solar power station in a remote corner of the world can be profitable. This has led to an abundance of liquidity but a lack of projects. And the administrative and financial processes are often long and complex, dissuading companies from investing.

However, not all electrical investments are profitable. Local authorities need to help develop economic models that will bring electricity to public services like schools and health centres.

Providing access to electricity in previously deprived areas can even pave the way for the development of new activities. This in turn will increase demand in the region and increase profitability in the long run.

Overall, as the speakers at the CADE conference all agreed, the real issue is to reduce the risk associated with these investments while preserving an attractive return. Investors and energy companies need to find the right balance between profitability and providing electricity at a price that is acceptable to the population.

The unexpected meteoric rise of the telecoms market in Africa proves that the demand is there.

As William Nkoutchou from Emerging Capital Partners said, “Telecoms benefited from market mechanisms that allowed them to improve their services and cut their prices. It is price flexibility that will allow operators to invest in increasing capacity.”

Need for formalisation and centralisation

Among PWC’s other recommendations was the establishment of a fund dedicated to financing off-grid projects, fed by both public and private donors. For Jean, the electrification of the continent required “top-down plans produced at national or regional level”.

Nguer said, “All the projects should be centralised, for example by the African Union and the African Development Bank (ADB), in order to more efficiently allocate the funds provided by Western public donors.”

“These institutions should be able to explain clearly to their contributors what their money has been used for.”

The up-coming COP 22 in Morocco could provide the boost needed to make the first steps in this direction.

“There is a post-COP 21 momentum. Many countries made commitments. Now they have to honour them,” said Nguer. “Africa must also be able to propose projects and to organise itself to receive the help it needs. The COP 22 should be the occasion for this to happen.”

Concessionary loans can help with financing. And facilitators (like JL Borloo or Power Africa, an initiative launched by Barack Obama) could form the bridge between the two worlds, “to encourage actors to develop renewables or to replace coal-powered electricity generation with gas, which emits half as much CO2, and so on.”

But what Africa really needs is “the emergence of energy leaders that can bring entrepreneurial spirit”. For Jean, this is a development that could bring major progress with the electrification of the continent.

(EurActiv 28-07-2016)

MALAWI DEVELOPING NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY

Malawi is planning to develop a National Tourism Policy which will among other things help in regulating as well as developing the sector.

For a long time, the country had been using the draft policy which was developed in 2014.

Secretary for Tourism, Elsie Tembo, told stakeholders in the commercial city of Blantyre on Monday that the policy will address many challenges facing the sector like institutional arrangements, product development and destination awareness among others.

“This policy will help to contribute a lot in the social and economic development since the country will open up to more local and international tourism markets,” she said.

According to her, over 800,000 people visited Malawi in 2014.

With the policy, she said, more people will be attracted because some of the bottlenecks which negatively affected their visits have been addressed including visas, improvement of infrastructure and other regulations.(APA 05-09-2016)

SIERRA LEONE’S WEAK CURRENCY THREATENS TO WRECK ECONOMY

The never-ending diminishing value of the leone, the Sierra Leone currency, against hard currencies, particularly the US dollar, has aroused heated controversy among the general public.

The leone’s sharp decline in value against the US Dollar over the years has inflicted considerable suffering on the country’s impoverished population.

Sierra Leone’s monetary economy has been divided into two parts, the leone economy and the US dollar economy.

Many businesses and households have endorsed the US dollar as the legal tender in almost all their economic activities. However, majority of Sierra Leoneans, especially the 70 percent of the population living below the poverty line, remain stuck in the leone economy.

Many people, including civil-service employees with fixed salaries, have seen their purchasing power declined sharply mainly due to weak local currency in a country that imports almost everything to meet local demand.

Moreover, landlords are obliging poor tenants to pay their rents in US dollar; a requirement many people describe as rip off. Government's campaign to persuade citizens to remain loyal to the leone has fallen on deaf ears.

The mining sector, the country's main source of foreign exchange earnings, has been hit hard by the 2014 Ebola outbreak and the fall of commodity prices in the international market. Now the government has run out of easy alternatives to stop the national currency from going down.

However, there are bunch of both short-term and long-term programs that the government could introduce to remedy the situation.

Firstly, the country must come up with effective long-term plans that could reduce the import bill significantly and narrow the trade deficit considerably.

A country that spends about 70 percent of its foreign exchange earnings to import food, Sierra Leone must design long-term polities aimed at producing enough food to feed its people and in ten or fifteen years become a major exporter.

Inflation has got out of hand, largely driving by high food prices, especially the staple, rice. Importers have monopolized the food market, making sufficient food unaffordable for many households. Food security could be guaranteed in a country where 74 percent of the land is suitable for cultivation.

Secondly, the country must see investment in education as a long-term solution to the economic crisis that has dragged on for far too long.

The Sierra Leone's workforce lacks the necessary skills and technology needed to face the challenges of the 21st Century.

Therefore, the country spends lot of hard currency to outsource skilled labour from foreign countries, particularly in the mining and construction sectors.

The education sector must be prioritized in efforts to develop the economy and stabilize the leone in the long run if the country is serious about combating the chronic high unemployment, especially among youths who make up a majority of the population.

Another option as a short-term solution is to abandon the leone in favor of the exclusive use of the U.S. dollar.

Implementing full dollarization could reduce the country's economic risk, thereby providing a stable and secure economic and investment climate.

However, dollarization has both advantage and disadvantage, depending on how the country manages it. (APA 08-09-2016)

EU COMMITS TO CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN LIBYA

As the Spring Forward for Women programme is ending, the European Union has agreed to continue supporting Libyan women's equal and active political engagement and participation. Building on work conducted by UN Women and other actors, UN Women will host a meeting on 8 September in Libya to highlight the urgency of re-positioning women in humanitarian, peace and transition processes and to leverage policy and programme commitments towards their meaningful participation.

The agenda's main focus will be on securing spaces for women's equal and active engagement in humanitarian, peace and transitional processes, through four agreed tracks:

- rebuilding the state,
- protection,
- prevention, and
- participation.

The expected result of the meeting is two-fold:

- The international community and Libyan women reaffirm the importance of ensuring the increased participation and representation of women at all levels of decision-making in Libya.
- Concrete implementable actions are identified, to be undertaken by represented stakeholders.

Spring Forward for Women is a joint initiative of UN Women and the European Commission. The programme supports the economic empowerment of women in the Southern Mediterranean region and enhances their participation in the political and decision-making spheres. The programme is financed through a contribution of EUR 7 million from the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and EUR 1.2 million from the UN Women core budget. (EEAS 08-09-2016)
Spring forward for women project – fiche and news

ECOWAS VALIDATES FINAL REPORT ON DAKAR-LAGOS CORRIDOR STUDY

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Project Preparation and Development Unit (PPDU) is expected to soon validate the final draft report on the study of the missing links in the proposed Dakar-Lagos Corridor.

Speaking at the opening of a two-day validation workshop which opened in Monrovia on Tuesday, the Commissioner for Infrastructure at the ECOWAS Commission, Antoinette Weeks said the specific objective of the study is to establish a complete inventory of the corridor missing links.

Weeks pointed out that the study will determine an appropriate engineering solution for the upgrading of the entire corridor and will also undertake an economic, social and environmental appraisal for the consideration of investment options.

She noted that the study will compliment and provide a solid foundation for the upcoming detailed engineering design on the Abidjan-Lagos (Phase 1) and Dakar –Abidjan-phase11) highways.

The workshop brought together experts from ECOWAS member states and other stakeholders. (APA 07-08-2016)

KENYA: AFRICA SEES JUMP IN FOOD PRODUCTION, GDP GROWTH

A decade of intense domestic attention to farmers and food production has generated “the most successful development effort” in African history, with countries that made the biggest investments rewarded with sizeable jumps in both farm productivity and overall economic performance, according to a new report released on Wednesday by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).

These are among the key findings noted in AGRA’s 2016 African Agriculture Status Report (AASR), “Progress towards an Agriculture Transformation of Sub-Saharan Africa.”

The document provides an in-depth and unsparing review of an incredibly active ten-year period for African agriculture—one AGRA framework as a prelude for potentially big things to come.

The report released at the ongoing high-powered African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) being in Nairobi, and which is attracting heads of state and high-level officials from around the world.

“The last ten years have made a strong case for agriculture as the surest path to producing sustainable economic growth that is felt in all sectors of society—and particularly among poor Africans,” said AGRA President Agnes Kalibata.

The report finds that “after decades of stagnation, much of Africa has enjoyed sustained agriculture productivity growth since 2005, and as a result, poverty rates have declined in places like Ghana, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso.

The report notes that agriculture has had its biggest impact in countries that moved quickly to embrace the African Union’s Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which was created in 2003. A key component of CAADP was its call for African governments to allocate 10 percent of national budgets to agriculture and to aim for six percent annual growth in the sector.

The AGRA report notes that even if they did not hit the 10 percent targets, early adopters of the CAADP goals have seen productivity on existing farmland rise by 5.9 to 6.7 percent per year. (APA 07-09-2016)

ETHIOPIA SPEEDS UP DRY WASTE RECYCLING SCHEME TO GENERATE ELECTRICITY

Ethiopia is speeding up construction work on its waste-to-energy power plant in Addis Ababa which is projected to generate up to 50mw of electricity through the recycling of dry wastes gathered from around the city.
The so-called Repi land-fill power project has reached 87 percent completion, according to Water, Irrigation and Electricity ministry official, Nicholas Halias, who claimed the initiative will be completed by December this year.

In an interview with APA on Monday, Halias, who is also the deputy head of the project said overall construction work including the installation of machinery is being finalized in Addis Ababa where the plant will be located.

The installation of two turbine generators and power control units have since been completed, Nicholas revealed.

The UK-based Cambridge Industries and the China National Electric Engineering Corporation are jointly undertaking the project which is valued at an estimated $95million.

The project is believed to complement ways of limiting carbon emissions by holding back methane gas amounting to 46,494 tons of CO_2.

Emphasizing this fact, Nicholas pointed to what he called its double advantage given that the initiative will clean the capital Addis Ababa of tons of dirt on the one hand and address interruptions in power supply in the city on the other.

"The project will hit completion within the stipulated schedule unless we face unforeseen challenges going beyond our capability" said Bizuneh Tolcha, Director for Public Relations and Communication at the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy.

If the Repi project is accomplished, it will be Africa's first waste-to-energy initiative generating 50mw of power. (APA 05-09-2016)

ERICSSON, GALAXY BACKBONE PARTNER TO TRANSFORM PUBLIC SERVICES IN NIGERIA

Ericsson and Galaxy Backbone, the Government ICT shared services provider in Nigeria, has today announced a partnership to design and deploy ICT based solutions and services supporting the delivery of efficient public services in the country.

This partnership is in keeping with the Nigerian Government's commitment to leverage ICT for job creation, improved security, economic diversification and social inclusion. It also supports the Minister of Communication's vision to deploy e-Government as a tool to improve governance and efficiency in the delivery of quality public services.

Yusuf Kazaure, Chief Executive Officer, Galaxy Backbone says: “The transformative role of ICT for improved delivery of public services has become quite significant and in Nigeria Galaxy is at the forefront in terms of the provision of the infrastructure and services that empower MDAs to achieve their mandates through better service delivery to the citizens they serve”.

Under the terms of the partnership, spanning three years, Ericsson will serve as advisor, systems integrator and implementation partner for ICT based solutions and services covering the transport, utility and safety and security sectors.

Ericsson will also manage all deployed solutions and services while building capacity within Galaxy Backbone and partner public parastatals ensuring that all deployments are eventually handed over to the government along with selected private sector players.

Johan Jemdahl, Head of Ericsson Nigeria, says: “A recent report by Ericsson and the Earth Institute at Columbia University on the impact of ICT on sustainable development, calls on governments to harness technology, investment and new types of partnerships to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This partnership with Galaxy Backbone touches upon all of these criteria and places Nigeria on a clear path towards meeting the needs of a growing economy using ICT. This partnership also supports our vision of building a networked society in Nigeria and we are excited to be partnering Galaxy Backbone on this journey.”

Upon the finalization of scoping the required solutions, all involved parties will jointly agree on the investment business models that best suit what is required to most efficiently roll out this new vision. Additionally, the inclusion of outside participation from third party investors will be discussed and finalized. (IT News Africa 07-09-2016)

SIERRA LEONE TO SCRAP SCHOOL SUBSIDIES

The Sierra Leonean government is scrapping school subsidies provided as part of a package to reduce financial hardship that hit the education sector by the Ebola epidemic.

The subsidy provided during the last two years was meant for school fees of pupils in Junior and Senior Secondary Schools. It was also meant to help cash-strained parents hit by the effect of the epidemic, which paralyzed economic activities in the country.

In Sierra Leone, schools will resume on September 12 as the 2016/2017 academic year commences.

This year, the country will also resume its usual academic calendar, which was interrupted by the epidemic, reducing school terms to two, instead of the normal three terms.

For the past two years we were doing a catch up. So this year we are going to start our normal schooling system, Minister of Education, Dr. Minkailu Bah, was quoted as saying on Monday.

On the subsidy issue, he said President Ernest Bai Koroma had promised to pay for two years and that the time had elapsed.

Parents should endeavour to pay for their children, he said.

But the government, he added, would continue to pay school fees for girls at the Junior Secondary School level as part of its girls empowerment policy and that the free primary school education would continue in force. (APA 05-09-2016)

S/LEONE SPENDS $250MILLION ON FOOD IMPORTS

Sierra Leone is spending $250 million annually on food imports, according to Agriculture minister Professor Patrick Monty Jones.

Press reports published on Monday quoted Mr. Jone as disclosing that $150million of this amount is consumed by rice alone.

Such a bill is financially straining the government and all efforts must be made to cut down on it, the minister said.

Jones added that it also made it necessary for farmers to be technically and economically empowered to enable them increase production and move away from subsistence to mechanize farming.

The minister is currently on a nationwide tour of the country to distribute agricultural machineries and funds to farmers' groups.

This forms an integral part of the government's plan to encourage farmers to embark on large-scale farming activities (APA 05-09-2016)

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION: EU PROJECT HELPS DEVELOP TUNISIAN TOURISM AND FOOD INDUSTRY ACTION PLANS

With the support of the EU-funded SwitchMed programme and based on the results of the national sustainable development strategy, the Tunisian Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development has made an assessment of sustainable consumption and production in Tunisia and produced two action plans for two priority sectors - tourism and the food industry, for the 2016-2025 period.

The Food Industry Action Plan 2016-2025 suggests the following actions:
- rationalise the use of natural resources and reduce harmful substances (pesticides and waste);
- promote sustainable agricultural practices and local know-how;
- ensure the viability of farming activity.

The Tourism Action Plan 2016-2025 suggests to:
- promote the sustainable management of resources and encourage collective action;

- develop sustainable waste management and its reuse;
- improve the quality of services offered and develop environmental certification;
- encourage the integration of a social and societal approach;
- promote the consumption of local and organic products;
- take into consideration the risks of submersion and coastal erosion.

The **SwitchMed sustainable consumption and production programme** aims to promote a switch by the Mediterranean economies towards sustainable consumption and production patterns and green economy, including low-emission development, through demonstration and dissemination of methods that improve resource and energy efficiency. It also seeks to minimise the environmental impacts associated with the life cycle of products and services and, where possible, to promote renewable energy. (SwitchMed 08-09-2016)

ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES: THREE MORE WEEKLY FLIGHTS TO CHINA'S GUANGZHOU

Ethiopian Airlines Monday announced that it will add a thrice weekly service, on top of its daily flights, to Guangzhou, China as of October 8, 2016.

Henceforth, Ethiopian Airlines will operate eleven weekly flights to and from the Chinese city.

Group CEO Ethiopian Airlines, Tewolde Gebremariam, said in a statement on Monday: “We are pleased to launch more frequency to Guangzhou, one of the largest Chinese cities. Ethiopian has become the airline of choice among travelers between China, Africa and Brazil."

He added: "We offer the best and fastest connectivity options with a total of 31 weekly flights, operated with the latest and most comfortable B787 and B777 aircraft, to four gateways in China; Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong, and with an immediate connection to 52 destinations in Africa and Sao Paulo in Brazil. For sure, this move will play a significant role to the growing economic and people-to-people ties between Africa and China.”

Ethiopian is a Pan-African global carrier, operating the youngest fleet with an average of less than five years and currently serving 93 international destinations across five continents with over 240 daily departures. (APA 05-09-2016)

SME PROMOTION AGENCY PROBES 1,000 CAMEROON FIRMS

The Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Agency (APME) has just completed a survey of a thousand small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with a view to lending them more visibility.

Two years after the start of its activities, the public body which aims to address the problem of competitiveness of SMEs in Cameroon has an overview of their functions.

“The main constraint of our SMEs is access to finance, markets, and partnerships,” the CEO of APME, Jean-Marie Badga lamented.

As a first response, a modernization and support program for SMEs was developed and has a website and an accounting and customer management software.

“We just completed a survey of 1,000 SMEs to assess their needs to better support them. By the end of the year, we plan to support 300 to 400 SMEs,” Badga said. (APA 05-09-2016)

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